

THE BUDDHIST



SEPTEMBER, 1957

Vol. XXVIII

No. 5

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THE BUDDHIST

(Organ of the Colombo Young Men's Buddhist Association)

“*Sīla Paññānato Jayam*”



FOUNDED 1888

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CONTENTS

	Page
Editorial	143
Buddhism and The Scientific Revolution by K. N. Jayatileka ...	144
Forum	147
Book Review	150
Readers' Queries	150
News	152

“ THE BUDDHIST ”

formation and knowledge on all matters pertaining to Buddhism—as a philosophy and as a religion—Buddhist civilization and Buddhist movements in the World. Secondly, it should be an open forum to allay misconceptions and misunderstandings, prejudices and misinterpretations and clear up doubts. Thirdly, it should be a powerful organ through which the hopes and aspirations of the Buddhist youth could find expression. The Editors are fully aware of the paucity of monthly or weekly journals available to the Buddhists for these purposes. Therefore it is intended that the scope of “The Buddhist,” should be widened to meet the demands of the day. We invite our readers—whether they are members of the Y.M.B.A. or not, whether they are from Ceylon or abroad—to send in their suggestions.

In order to make a beginning, two features will find their place in this issue, besides the usual articles on Buddhist subjects and the news of the Associations; They are the *Forum* and the *Readers' Queries*. In “the Forum,” a subject on which there are diverse views will be proposed in the form of a full article and views of the readers will be invited. It is hoped that a particular subject could be discussed in three or four consecutive issues. No finality will be aimed at and the object of the discussions

will purely be the quest for knowledge and the understanding of the other man's point of view.

The Editors feel that our readers have many problems which they like to put before a learned *thera* or a scholar with the hope of getting a solution. The readers also wish to have some information which is not readily available where they are. In the new feature, which we have called “Readers' Queries,” we hope to help them. Readers are requested to send in their questions on any matters pertaining to Buddhism; a reply will be published along with the question in the earliest possible issue of the journal. The reply will, in all cases, be given by an authority on the subject; but it shall be subject to further queries and criticism.

By these two features, “the Buddhist” seeks to promote a spirit of inquiry which is a *sine qua non* for the proper understanding of Buddhism. We have no misapprehensions as regards the usefulness of the discussions we hope to conduct. The Buddha himself has enjoined that his followers should examine carefully even his own teachings and more diverse our views the greater is our need for clarification. “The Buddhist,” therefore, would have served a useful purpose if its readers are helped to grasp the fundamental teachings of the Buddha, and understand their true import.

WITH the appointment of His Excellency Dr. G. P. Malalasekera as the Ambassador of Ceylon in U.S.S.R. and the departure of the assistant editor, Mr. Saddhamangala Karunaratne on a scholarship in Archaeology to Great Britain, it has become necessary to appoint a set of new editors to undertake the publication of “The Buddhist.” We take this opportunity to record our sincere appreciation of the most invaluable services rendered by them towards the progress of the Journal.

“The Buddhist” is the organ of the Colombo Y.M.B.A. and as such it stands for the lofty ideals which characterize the activities of the Association. It is our desire that this journal should serve the Buddhist youth of this country in more than one way. Firstly, it should be a reliable source of in-

BUDDHISM AND THE SCIENTIFIC REVOLUTION

By K. N. JAYATILEKA, M.A.

(University of Ceylon)

IT is a historical fact that the scientific revolution which took its rise in the seventeenth century in the West was largely responsible for upsetting the earlier religious conception of the universe. Not only did science controvert the specific dogmas of Western religion, but it seemed to have undermined the foundations as well as the fundamental concepts implicit in the religious outlook on things.

The new cosmology of Copernicus, Galileo and his successors altered the geocentric picture of the universe although it was pronounced to be "contrary to the Holy Scriptures." The new biology (the theory of evolution) upset the doctrines of the special creation and the fall of man. And the new psychology seemed to show that man's mind, like his physical body, worked on a pattern of causal law and that however deep one plumbed into its depths there was not discoverable in it an unchanging soul which governed its activities entirely.

But much more serious was the effect of the scientific outlook on the general religious attitude which involved a belief in a Personal God, in purpose and in the objectivity of moral values. Science made its discoveries and progressed quite comfortably on the assumption of universal causation without the necessity for teleological explanations or divine intervention. It dealt with an amoral universe indifferent to the aspirations of man. As among men, moral values like economic values were subjective since they were dependent on the needs and desires of men, and an ethical humanism was the best that could be hoped for. Even such an ethics need not be universal, for, as anthropologists discovered, different societies seem to have followed different moral codes which suited them and ethical relativism was the scientific truth about the nature of moral values.

Of course, there are those who still cling to the dogmas in the face of science or believe in them in a non-literal sense. But the position remains very much the same although people are no longer optimistic (after two world wars and

in the throes of a third) about the ability of science to usher in a brave new world of peace and plenty. It has also been granted by those who do not dismiss the concept of God as meaningless that certain conceptions of God may not be incompatible with the scientific account of the universe and that mechanistic explanations need not necessarily rule out teleological ones. Science too has given up the crude materialism of the eighteenth century and scientists no longer attempt to explain the universe on machine models, while some scientists have denied that strict determinism holds in the sphere of the atom. But all this is still a far cry from religion.

What place would Buddhism occupy in such a context? Are its dogmas and attitudes no better or no worse than those of any other religion? Most Western writers on religion seem to have assumed that this was so, but if one reads through some of the Buddhist (and Hindu) texts, one begins to wonder whether the scientific revolution would have at all affected religion adversely if it had taken place in the context of Early Buddhism or the Upanishads.

I say this because I find that Early Buddhism, in particular, emphasises the importance of the scientific outlook in dealing with the problems of morality and religion. Its specific "dogmas" are said to be capable of verification. And its general account of the nature of man and the universe is one that accords with the findings of science rather than being at variance with them.

To take this last point first, we find, for instance, that the Early Buddhist conception of the cosmos is in essence similar to the modern conception of the universe. In the Pali texts that have come down to us we are literally told that hundreds and thousands of suns and moons, earths, and higher worlds, constitute the minor world system, that a hundred thousand times this is the middling world system, and a hundred thousand times the middling world system is the major world system. In modern terminology it would seem as if a minor world system (*cūlanika-loka-dhātu*) is a galaxy of which we observe about a

hundred million through our best telescopes. The Buddhist conception of time is equally immense.

There is, of course, no theory of evolution as such mentioned in the Buddhist texts, but men and society as well as worlds are pictured as changing and evolving in accordance with causal laws. But what the Buddhist texts lacked seemed to have been supplied by the avatar-doctrine of the Hindus who regarded God as having manifested Himself on earth successively in the forms of a fish, tortoise, boar, man-animal, pygmy-man, man-with-axe, Rama who rules a community in accordance with law, Krishna who gives spiritual guidance, and finally, Buddha. These manifestations would appear to be strangely in accord with the stages in the evolution of man.

Then in psychology we find Early Buddhism regarding man as a psycho-physical unit whose "psyche" is not a changeless soul but a dynamic continuum composed of a conscious mind as well as an unconscious in which is stored the residue of emotionally charged memories going back to childhood as well as into past lives.

Such a mind is said to be impelled to act under the influence of three types of desires—the desire for sense-gratification (*kāma-tanhā*) the desire for self-preservation (*bhava-tanhā*) and the desire for domination and annihilation (*vibhava-tanhā*). Except for the belief in rebirth, this conception of the mind sounds very modern, and one cannot also fail to observe the parallel between the threefold desires of Buddhism and the Freudian conceptions of the libido, eros and thanatos.

I have brought out these similarities not with the intention of showing that Buddhism teaches modern science but that the scientific revolution does not have the same adverse effect on Buddhism as it had on another religious tradition.

Now let us turn to the context of Buddhism as a theory about the nature and destiny of man. First of all it holds that the honest and impartial search for truth even in matters moral and religious is no bar to one's spiritual progress. On

more than one occasion the Buddha has admonished honest seekers after the truth in the following words:— "You have raised a doubt in a situation in which you ought to suspend your judgment. Do not accept anything because it is rumoured so, because it is the traditional belief, because the majority hold to it, because it is found in the scriptures, because it is the product of metaphysical argument and speculation or after a superficial investigation of facts, or because it conforms with one's inclinations, because it is authoritative, or because of the prestige value of your teacher." Critical investigation and personal verification was to be the guide to true morality and religion. "If anyone were to speak ill of me, my doctrine and my order," says the Buddha, "do not bear any ill-will towards him, be upset or perturbed at heart, for if you were to be so, it will only cause you harm. If, on the other hand, anyone were to speak well of me, my doctrine and my order, do not be overjoyed, thrilled or elated at heart, for if so, it will only be an obstacle in your way of forming a correct judgment as to whether the qualities praised in us are real and actually found in us." A scientific outlook was thus considered necessary not only for discovering the truly moral and religious life, but even for the continual self-examination which such a life demands.

The field of moral and religious phenomena is again, not a realm of mystery but one in which the law of cause and effect holds. The principle of causal determination, namely, that A is the cause of B if "whenever an event A occurs, an event B occurs, and B does not occur unless A has occurred" is laid down by the Buddha in these very terms, and he further states that "he speaks only of the causes of things which arise from causes." Thus all phenomena, including moral and spiritual experience (with the sole exception of *Nirvāna* which is not a phenomenon) are said to be conditioned by causal laws. Such laws are classified according to their sphere of operation as physical laws (*utuniyāma*), biological laws (*bijaniyāma*), psychological laws (*cittaniyāma*) and moral and spiritual laws (*dhammaniyāma*).

Now there are three laws which are said to govern the life and destiny of the individual. They are the law of continuity which makes

for the persistence of individuality (*bhava*), the law of moral retribution (*karma*) whereby morally good acts tend to result in pleasant consequences for the individual and morally evil acts in unpleasant consequences, and, finally, the law of causal genesis (*paticca samuppāda*) which is intended to explain the above two laws.

The law of continuity, popularly known as rebirth, ensures the persistence of the dynamic Unconscious of the individual with the death of the physical body. If this Unconscious is not attuned to higher worlds by the moral and spiritual development of the individual, it is said generally to persist in the spirit-sphere (*petti-visaya*) as a discarnate spirit, and subsequently get reincarnated as a human being. Critics of Buddhism often suggest that this theory of rebirth is dogmatically accepted or taken for granted in Buddhism, but a careful study of the texts would show that this is not the case. Buddhism arose at a time when there was intense speculation on the problem of survival. The Upanishads prior to Buddhism suggest several theories of survival, and the theory of rebirth was only one of many. There were also several schools of materialism all of which denied survival altogether and there were the sceptics who merely doubted the possibility of survival. Even experiments such as the weighing of the body immediately before and after death were performed in order to discover any evidence of survival. One of the materialist theories mentioned and dismissed by the Buddha was that consciousness was a by-product of the material elements being mixed up in certain proportions to form the organic body "in the same way in which the red colour is produced by suitable mixtures of betel, arecanut and lime" (none of which is red). Several such materialist theories, as well as a number of one-life-after-death theories, some of which held that the soul was conscious after death, others that it was unconscious (but existing), and yet others that it was super-conscious after death, are examined and disposed of by the Buddha. The theory of rebirth is offered as one capable of being verified by developing the faculty of seeing our former births, a potentiality which is said to be within the reach of all of us.

Rebirth is, therefore, not a dogma to be accepted on faith but an

hypothesis capable of being scientifically verified. The available evidence for rebirth today is roughly of two sorts. There is the spontaneous evidence of numerous people from both East and West who have claimed to remember their past lives, in some cases of which the memories have been confirmed by further investigation (e.g., The Case of Shanti Devi, *Illustrated Weekly of India*, December 15, 1935; The case of Nellie Horster, *Milwaukee Sentinel*, September 25, 1892). There is also the more reliable and more abundant evidence of psychiatrists and psychologists who have discovered that under hypnotic trance the subject's memories can be traced back not only to childhood but to prior earth lives as well, in some cases of which the facts have been verified (e.g., A. de Rochas, *Les Vives Successives*, Bibliotheque Charcomac, Paris; Ralph Shirley, *The problem of Rebirth*, Rider & Co., London; Professor Theodore Flournoy, *Des Indes la planete Mars*; Professor Charles E. Cory, "A Divided Self": Article in *Journal of Abnormal Psychology*, Vol. XIV, 1919).

The law of moral retribution or *karma* as taught in Buddhism has also been criticised on the grounds that it amounts to fatalism. This again is due to ignorance of the Buddhist teaching. Causation in Buddhism is carefully distinguished by the Buddha on the one hand from strict Determinism and on the other from Indeterminism. The Buddha argues that if everything was determined, then there would be no free will and no moral or spiritual life would be possible and we would be slaves of the past: and if, on the other hand, everything was indetermined (*adhicca-samuppanna*) or fortuitous, then again the moral and spiritual life would not be possible, for the cultivation of moral and spiritual values would not result in moral and spiritual growth. It is because the world is so constituted that everything is not strictly determined or completely indetermined that the religious life is possible and desirable, according to the Buddha.

In order to explain rebirth and *karma*, some of the Upanishadic thinkers who accepted these doctrines had recourse to the concept of *ātman* or a changeless soul. The individual continued to be the same because he had a permanent soul which was the agent of all the actions of the individual as well as the

experiencer of their fruits. The Buddha was quick to see that such metaphysical entities explained nothing and that it was meaningless to assert or deny an unverifiable. He, therefore, rejected the concept of soul while maintaining the doctrine of the observable continuity of the individuality, and explained the above two laws of continuity and moral retribution in terms of all the verifiable phenomenal factors which determine the continued genesis and growth of the individual. This is too elaborate to be set out in detail. In brief, it describes how the individual is conditioned by his psychological past (going back to past lives which set the general tone of his character) and the genetical constitution of his body derived from his parents, and continues to act in and react with his environment accumulating the experiences of this life in his evolving consciousness (*samvattenikaviññāna*) which continues after the death of the body if the threefold desires in it be still active.

Personal and direct knowledge of the operation of these three laws constitutes the "threefold knowledge" (*tisso vijjā*) which the Buddha and His disciples claimed to have. The awareness of the fact that and the way in which one is being conditioned is said to result in one ceasing to be conditioned, a state which corresponds to the attainment of the unconditioned and supreme felicity of *Nirvāna*. This is salvation in Buddhism which is literally salvation from the bondage of finite conditioned existence.

Strictly *Nirvāna* is said to be beyond description or conception, the reason given being that it is a state of being so radically different from the types of existent things which we can conceive of that no meaningful description or definition of it can be given in conceptual terms. It is said that to say that one "exists" in *Nirvāna* is wrong, for existence is a concept that applied to phenomenal things and has reference to space and time, for *Nirvāna* is "timeless, in that one cannot speak of it as being in the past, present or future," is not located in space and is not causally conditioned unlike all phenomenal things: but it is also said to be equally wrong to say that one "does not exist" in *Nirvāna* since this implies a state of oblivion and annihilation. Nevertheless both positive as well as negative descriptions are given

though they are not to be taken as exact definitions, as *Nirvāna* is *beyond the scope of logic*.

Negatively it is the absence of all unhappiness, and all phenomenal existence is said to be infected with unhappiness; we are unhappy either because we experience mental or physical pain and have forebodings for the future, or because the pleasant experience that we have are insecure and never lasting. This is to take a realistic view of life even in the face of the fact that, as the Buddha says, "human beings enjoy on the whole more pleasant experiences than unpleasant ones," and therefore it would not be correct to call it pessimism since it has nothing to do with wishful thinking. Positively *Nirvāna* is described as a state of "supreme felicity" (*paramam sukham*) and as an "infinite intelligence beyond all phenomenal things, without distinguishing mark but of immeasurable splendour." *Nirvāna*, in short, is the God of Buddhism, but it is not pictured as a Person or a Creator.

It is God as intuited by the individual who shakes off the finite trappings of his individuality in the process and becomes God himself (*Brahma-bhūta*). Such a conception of God is neither limited by conceptual bounds nor is it totalitarian, since all sentient beings are said to have the capacity and potentiality of becoming so.

The way of salvation is described as an eightfold path in which the *first step is that of entertaining and living in accordance with the true philosophy of life* and as a result having right aspirations, right speech, right actions, right mode of living and right mindfulness, culminating in the growth of religious joy and the spiritual and intuitive awareness of right meditation or contemplation. The full fruit of right contemplation, however, can be reaped by those giving up the active social life for the contemplative life. This meditative life is characterised by stages of attainment, and the aspirant is said to go through the stages of personal mystical consciousness (*rūpa-jhāna*) and impersonal mystical consciousness (*arūpa-jhāna*), culminating in the attainment of *Nirvāna*. With the growth of his mind and spirit there are said to emerge certain faculties latent in him such as telepathy and clairvoyance and ability to see his past lives. These cognitive faculties, as explained earlier,

make it possible for the individual to realise the conditioned state in which he is, and thereby to attain the unconditioned. Considering the requirements of the path, the Way to *Nirvāna* is therefore described as the culmination of a person's moral development (*sīla*), intuitional or spiritual development (*samādhi*), as well as his intellectual or cognitive development (*paññā*). The Buddha was once asked "Whether He hoped to save one-third of the world, one-half of the world or the whole world by offering this Way of Salvation," to which He replied that he does not claim to save one-third of humanity, half of humanity or all humanity, but that just as a skilful door-keeper guarding the only entrance to the palace knows that all those who seek the haven of this palace must enter by this door, even so all those in the past who were saved, who in the present are being saved and who in the future will be saved, have entered, are entering and will enter by this door.

Such is the teaching of Early Buddhism which is offered as a self-consistent scientific hypothesis touching the matters of religion and morality which each person can verify for himself. In fact, not being based on revelation, the fact that it has been verified by him and hundreds of his disciples and is capable of being verified by every earnest seeker is put forward as the criterion of its truth by the Buddha who criticised revelational religion as being unsatisfactory (though not necessarily false) on the grounds that revelations may be true or false. The empirical and pragmatic test of science is for the Buddha the test of true religion. The faith that he required is the trust that is required to put to the test a certain philosophy of life by devoting one's entire being to living it every moment of one's life. And its worth is to be realised by its fruits thereof by each person for himself. Like the scientists working in other fields, the Buddhas or the Perfect Ones have merely discovered these truths which are there for all time and have preached them for the good of the world. Each one has to seek and work out his own salvation; no one can save another and the Perfect Ones do merely point the way.

It would be seen that such a religion is in accord with the temper and the findings of science so that Buddhism is not likely to be at variance with science so long as

scientists confine themselves to their methodology and their respective fields without making a dogma of materialism.

But what attitude does Buddhism take up towards the basic concepts of Western religion which the scientific revolution undermined or ousted—namely God, purpose and the objectivity of moral values.

Briefly although Buddhism has been called atheistic, it would be more correct to say that it condemns only certain conceptions of God. Thus the theory that everything that happens is due to the fiat of a Personal God (*issaranimmāna-vāda*) is condemned, for on such a theory free-will would only be merely apparent. But the Buddha used the term "God" to refer to *Nirvāna* and in associated senses. A Buddha appears on earth to "set up the kingdom of righteousness" (*dhammacakkam pavattitam*)

which is elsewhere called "the kingdom of God" (*brahmacakkam*). Faith in God, according to Buddhism is a matter of faith in moral and spiritual values, and those who lead a truly moral and religious life are said to "live with God" (*Brahmanā saddhim samvasati*). As such, saving dogmas and magical rites have no place in Buddhism which defines the right philosophy of life as "the belief in some efficacy in prayer and sacrifice, the belief in survival and moral retribution, the belief in moral obligations and the belief in religious teachers who claim to know this world and the next." It should be noted in the context of Buddhism that what is commended as "prayer and sacrifice" is not selfish prayer or animal sacrifice. The above conception of God is again not at variance with science since all events in the world are said to be conditioned in accordance with causal laws thus leaving no room for miracle of divine intervention.

As for purpose, the Buddhist view is that the world as such has no purpose to accomplish though individuals in it may choose their own ends and thus make their lives purposeful; the end recommended by Buddhism being *Nirvāna*.

The Buddha would argue that if the world had a purpose to be attained in a final consummation, then either salvation would be assured for all or some be foredoomed and damned for eternity; but according to the Buddha there is no necessity or inevitability in progress; no one is destined to attain *Nirvāna* unless he wishes to. But as for moral values Buddhism upholds their objectivity, for according to the law of *karma*, a drunkard, for instance, unless he repents (*i.e.*, changes his ways), tends to be reborn as a moron whatever the opinions or wishes of the drunkard or the members of his society may be.

FORUM

THE recent celebrations, held throughout the world in connection with the 2500th Anniversary of the Parinibbana of the Buddha, have brought to the fore a question which has been often asked but never properly replied: Can the unification of the two major sects of Buddhism—*i.e.*, the Theravada and the Mahayana—be achieved? Let us answer this question. Here is one point of view as presented by Dr. Ananda Guruge. Readers are kindly requested to send in their views for publication in the next two issues of "The Buddhist." Only those articles which reach the Editors before the 15th of September will be published in the October issue.

LET THERE BE NO SECTS IN BUDDHISM

ABOUT an year ago I was editing a series of articles specially written for the Buddha Jayanti Souvenir of the Lanka Bauddha Mandalaya by distinguished writers from each of the Buddhist countries of Asia. All articles were written on a set plan and outlined the position which Buddhism held in each country. A point which attracted my attention was the reference to sects and schools which were said to exist in each country. Though as a statement of fact this should not surprise a student of Buddhist history, my reaction has been rather different. To me the mention of numerous sects and schools of thought appeared to be alien

to the spirit of Buddhism. Perhaps, the reason for this is that I have always looked upon Buddhism—in whatever form it is found or by whatever name it is known—as a mighty river which springs up from one source—the Buddha.

The Buddha was a historical personage. He spent forty-five years of his life teaching a way of life and training a multitude of monks to follow it and to win others over to it. In his life-time itself he organized an efficient system of missionary activity and when he died at the age of eighty his influence has spread to a very large portion of India. The teachings of this personage is what

is known as Buddhism. Presuming that the disciples recorded first in their unfailing memory and later in books these teachings as faithfully as they could, what passes in each of the Buddhist countries of Asia as Buddhism will have to be regarded as the Buddha's own teachings. But only few would subscribe to a view such as this even out of sheer generosity. There are many who will not hesitate to denounce certain aspects of Buddhist doctrines which are accepted as orthodox in some countries.

To clarify this point, let me examine the views generally held by the Buddhists of Ceylon. With legiti-

mate pride we hold it that Buddhism was preserved mainly due to the efforts of the monks of Ceylon. This is true. The Tripitaka, its commentaries and sub-commentaries would not have been available to the world today if not for their initiative and indefatigable labour. But we do not claim to have merely preserved Buddhism. We are very emphatic that we preserved it "in its pristine purity" and thus our land had become "the home of pure Buddhism." The moment we qualify Buddhism we have preserved as pure, a question can be and is asked: "Where else does one find pure Buddhism?" We certainly have a ready answer. We consider the school of Buddhism known as the *Thēravāda* to be the pure and orthodox form of Buddhism and hence our answer is that Burma, Thailand, Laos and Cambodia, too, have what we term "the pure form of Buddhism." We all agree on this. But what comes inevitably as a corollary to this view is that the doctrines preserved in other Buddhist countries of the world are "impure" or, in the least, unorthodox. This, however, is at variance with what each country thinks about its form of Buddhism. To a careful student of the situation, the difficulties created by it are evident. The Buddhist world is automatically split into two camps and the gap between them appear too vast to be bridged with any degree of facility.

Let us as promoters of a united Buddhist world review the position. Let us for a moment forget the differences which are said to exist between the so-called *Hinayāna* and *Mahāyāna* schools of Buddhism. Our approach should be one of investigation with a view to unravel what underlies these differences and to establish points of similarity. This is, indeed, very easy provided we start with an open mind. First and foremost, the personality of the Buddha is the strongest point of similarity. Whatever form the ideal of Buddhahood takes and whatever symbolism to which it is subjected, the historical Buddha is to all Buddhists in the world a reality and he is the one to whom they all pay their homage. Secondly, the goal which every Buddhist aims at is *Nirvāna* whether it be as a Buddha, a Pratyeka Buddha or an Arahant. Perhaps, the Mahayanist teachings emphasize the ideal of attaining *Nirvāna* through Bodhisattvahood to Buddhahood for the benefit of the multitudes. Yet, the goal is the

same. Thirdly, the fundamental doctrines are identical. The Four Noble Truths which are the pivot round which Buddhism rotates, the doctrines of *Karma*, rebirth, *Anātma*, dependent causation and the path are common to both schools. Besides, many texts are identical in both form and content. Both schools had the same scriptures to begin with. They depended entirely on their traditional records of the sayings of the Buddha and were anxious to preserve them in as authentic a form as possible. As far as the canonical teachings are concerned neither the Mahāyānists nor the Hinayānists ever attempted to vary, amend, add or delete what was traditionally handed over to them. Such a course of action was repugnant to the spirit in which the doctrines were learnt and disseminated.

Then how did the differences come into existence? Reasons are many but here are what I consider to be two of the most important causes for the divergences in the teachings.

It is generally accepted that wherever Buddhism was established it did not wipe out all traces of beliefs and practices upheld by the people prior to the introduction of Buddhism. Buddhism adapted itself to the rites and ceremonies, and even beliefs and superstitions of each country, and sought to exert its influence in the sphere of thought and philosophical outlook. A cursory analysis of Buddhism as found in Ceylon will help to understand this. A Buddhist in Ceylon pays homage to the Buddha, the Dharma and the Sangha and observes the Five Precepts. He believes in rebirth, the Four Noble Truths, the Eightfold Path etc., and aims at attaining *Nirvāna*. He performs what is enjoined by the Sangha as conducive to his progress towards the ultimate goal. As far as these are concerned, his association with Buddhism proper is undeniable. Then he has other convictions regarding his troubles and cares of life. He believes in a hoard of evil spirits and benevolent spirits or devas. He resorts to black magic to keep the evil spirits at bay. He performs *Bali*, *Tovil*, *Hūṇiyam* and *Kodivina*, with the motive of placating spirits and obtaining favours from them both in ensuring one's personal welfare and one's enemies' downfall. When in difficulty, he prays to the Devas whom

he believes to be the guardians of the world and makes offerings to them ranging from eulogies to costly gifts. He invokes their assistance when commencing an important project or starting on a journey. These, it should be clear to anybody, have nothing to do with Buddhism. But they continue to exist and are also acquiring a Buddhist tinge on account of the masterly combination of these prehistoric rites with the Buddhist ritual. Thus, if one examines the *yādinna*s and incantations used in Ceylon by the Buddhists, and works them into a unified whole with what is specifically Buddhist the result will be startling. If one still calls it Buddhism, it will be unique because the rites and beliefs of even the other *Theravāda* countries will bear little resemblance to those of ours. In each country this has happened. The only difference is that in some countries where the religious and philosophical attainments had been remarkable prior to the introduction of Buddhism the preponderance of native rites and beliefs had removed the Buddhist element from religious practices to a very great extent. The readiness with which the Buddhist missionaries of yore allowed the local religious beliefs to infiltrate into Buddhism had been the first cause for the creation of various schools and sects.

The second and equally important cause was the scholarly activity of the disciples of the Buddha. They began to interpret the teachings of the Buddha at a very early date. And their interpretations were bound to vary because the philosophical and educational background of each disciple played an important part in moulding his views on the words of the Buddha. The doctrines which are specifically Mahayanist can be in almost all cases be traced to the Canon, which as I have already stated, had been common to all schools and sects. Occasionally the meaning given to a saying of the Buddha by a scholarly monk with a *Vedānta* training can be different from that given by one with a *Nyāya* training. Similarly, various schools of thought both in India and China had exerted their influence on the interpretations of the canonical statements. To illustrate how the interpretation of an apparently straightforward statement of the Buddha could give rise to a new doctrine, I may mention the *Mahāyāna* teachings on

Tri-kāya. Ven. Pelānā Sī Vajira-ñāna Thera in an informative article in this journal of April, 1954, traced them to a number of canonical sayings. For instance, he establishes the origin of the doctrine of *Dharma-kāya* to the following statement in the *Mahā Parinibbāna Sutta*: "Ananda, when I am dead, do not think you are deprived of a teacher, for the *Dhamma* I have taught is with you. Treat my *Dhamma* as your Teacher when I am gone."

The differences which have come into existence among the forms of Buddhism followed in the Buddhist countries are altogether not so very serious as to enable any one country to claim for itself the most authentic or pure form of Buddhism or to embark on a campaign of effecting religious segregation. The fear which most people entertain that the influence of *Mahāyāna* would taint *Theravāda* or *vice versa* seems unfounded. Of course, there is a threat to the continuance of certain institutions which have become a part and parcel of each school. For instance, a Buddhist of a *Theravāda* country will shudder at the idea of replacing its *Saṅgha* with a priesthood of the type which certain *Mahayana* countries have developed. The same aversion, though in a lesser degree, may be extended to changes in ritual. These are, certainly, justifiable. But what is unhealthy is the lack of understanding and gross misunderstanding which seem to mar the cordial relations that should exist between the countries professing these two forms of Buddhism. There is a strong prejudice whose removal though not easy is essential. How was this prejudice created? Who were responsible for it? These are relevant questions and they have been answered for us by one of the most erudite Buddhist scholars of the West. In an interesting article under the caption "Buddhist Schools and Western Theories" to the *Ceylon Daily News Vesak Number* of 1947, Dr. E. J. Thomas has emphatically pointed an accusing finger at the Western scholars. He says, "It has been largely due to the fact that the so-called 'modern experts' have often been scholars who looked upon Buddhist differences as being of the same violent nature as the religious differences found in Europe." To quote from another paragraph of this article, "There has never been anything like Protestantism in Buddhism, by which he meant the rise

of conflicting sects fighting implacably against other sects that were originally part of the same community. Many varying views have arisen in Buddhism, but they have been additional, not contradictory and the fundamental doctrines have always remained."

The time has now come to launch a campaign sufficiently effective and strong to bring about a *Rapprochement*. Let each Buddhist country maintain its special rites and beliefs. But let there be a clear conception of what the fundamentals of Buddhism are. The ideal to be achieved sooner or later is a unified Buddhist world where sects will cease to be barriers in the way of attaining the highest good from the religion. A beginning has been made; the World Fellowship of Buddhists has gone a long way in moulding the Buddhist opinion in the world. There is already a brisk exchange of cultural missions and delegations among Buddhist countries. To expedite the process, the study of Buddhism as a whole irrespective of the traditional system peculiar to each country should be taken up by a large body of scholars. While every *Theravāda* Buddhist should know his own texts, a good knowledge of *Mahāyāna* should also be acquired.

In this connection, reference may be made to the reluctance shown by certain quarters in Ceylon to promote the study of *Mahāyāna*. Firstly, from the point of view of Buddhist scholarship and secondly, from the point of view of international understanding, such a move is undesirable. If *Mahāyāna* is removed from the curriculum of Buddhist studies especially in the advanced level, there is very little to study besides the texts. The works of Nāgarjuna, Asvaghosha, Asanga, Vasubandhu, Aryadeva, Dharmakīrti and others contain the essence of Buddhist scholarship and these alone reflect the development of Buddhist Philosophy. Similarly, the comparative study of the Pāli *Tri-pitaka* with the Canons in Sanskrit, Chinese and Tibetan can throw a flood of light on the life and teachings of the Buddha. No person—not even the most orthodox *Theravāda* Buddhist—who reads a work like *Suhṛllekha* of Nāgarjuna, will fail to see the value of the *Mahāyāna* literature which can, through its forceful style and sincerity of purpose, inspire faith and wisdom in the reader. It is idle to by-pass

the rich *Mahāyāna* literature merely because of a prejudice; those who will lose by such a course of action are certainly not the *Mahāyānists*.

More important than the study of *Mahāyāna* as an integral part of Buddhism is the necessity to consider those professing it as co-religionists and working in close co-operation with them towards the achievement of those lofty ideals which the Master has taught and which Buddhists of all sects and schools recognise as the fundamental features of the religion. Buddhists, today, have to perform a duty by humanity in general, which should leave no room for them to debate over points of ritual and religious practices. As long as the five hundred million people, who follow in the footsteps of the Buddha, agree that the underlying spirit of non-violence and loving-compassion should be placed before the warring mankind to save it from self-inflicted destruction nothing should stand as an obstacle—and the least of all, the differences of practices and theories. The ideal way of life which the Buddha taught the world is what all Buddhists should uphold and the points of divergence which have arisen purely due to historical circumstances can certainly be relegated to the background.

"Does not one thereby commit an evil act?" one is bound to ask. The fear of promoting or assisting the growth of heretical teachings is inborn in all Buddhists. But what are heretical teachings? The Buddha Himself had in the *Brahmajāla Sutta* enumerated no less than sixty-two of them. The doctrines accepted by the *Mahāyānists* do not come within these. Perhaps one may argue that the development of these doctrines was not anticipated. In that case let us examine how the Buddha distinguished between heretical and other teachings. Addressing Mahāprajāpati Gōtamī, the Buddha said, "Of whatsoever teaching thou canst assure thyself thus, 'these doctrines conduce to passions, not to dispassion, to bondage, not to detachment, to increase of worldly gains, not to decrease of them, to covetousness, not to frugality, to discontent and not to content, to company, not to solitude, to sluggishness, not energy, to delight in evil, not delight in good,' of such teachings thou mayest with certainty affirm, 'this is not the *Dhamma*, this is not the *Vinaya*, this is not

the Master's message.''' If we apply this test to the teachings of the *Mahāyāna* schools, we will discover that there is little that is repugnant to the Buddha's ideals. If so, why should we perpetuate the strong prejudice for the growth of which no person is more responsible than the ill-informed scholars of the West whose religious-philosophical background has been altogether different from Buddha?

As Dr. Thomas urges in the article which I have already mentioned, the Buddhists have to re-examine their books and arrive at conclusions which are in accordance with the spirit of the religion which they profess. If undertaken in the proper spirit, the result will be the emergence of Buddhism as a world religion without sects and schools. To the Buddhist who is still reluctant to accept this position, let me re-

mind the words of the great Buddhist Philosopher, Aryadeva :

*Svapakṣe vidyatē rāgaḥ
Parapakṣe tu te'prizaḥ
Nirvānaṃ nādhigachāsi
Na śivaṃ dvandvacārīnāḥ*

"If in you there is attachment to your doctrines and aversion to those of others, you will never attain *Nirvāna* for happiness is not for him who upholds two opposites, i.e., attachment and aversion.

(Reproduced from "*Hindustan Times*" of 11.8.1956).

BOOK REVIEW

The Glory of Sanchi.—Published by the Shell Company of Ceylon Ltd., in collaboration with the Ministry of Cultural Affairs on the occasion of Buddha Jayanti.

THIS album of twenty-eight large photographs of the stupas, the toranas and the beautiful carvings of Sanchi is a significant contribution towards the Buddhist literature which has been produced during the last two years in almost every Buddhist country by way of celebrating the Buddha Jayanti. No better medium than this could have been selected to impress on the present-day reader the vastness of the influence which the Buddha and his teachings exerted on the life and arts of the people of India. The richly carved archways of Sanchi tell us in the universally understood language of vivid pictures the tale of Buddhism right from the birth of its founder. Scenes from the life of the Buddha and from Jataka stories have been depicted along with eloquent records of events associated with the spread of Buddhism in the reign of Asoka. Every inch of a Sanchi archway gives irrefutable proof of an highly developed tradition of Buddhist Art.

To the pilgrim who had stood before these archways with reverence and admiration, this album brings back very pleasant memories of an experience which can better be gone through than described. To the historian and the lover of Buddhist art, these clear reproductions are a source of knowledge; their quiet scrutiny reveals much that is not generally noticed. Above all to the man-in-the-street, who may rarely have the fortune of visiting Sanchi, these pictures will serve a very useful purpose. This publication, perhaps, will be the only medium through which he gets a glimpse of one of the most wonderful—if not the most wonderful—centres of Buddhist Art.

The commentary written by Dr. T. Wimalananda is both informative and interesting. It is, however, a pity that he confined himself more or less to the archaeological and the historical aspects of the subject; if he attempted to evaluate the artistic significance of these archways, the commentary would have been of greater help in appreciating these car-

vings, which are fundamentally works of art. Dr. Wimalananda's essay on "Sanchi and Ceylon" should be of special interest to us in Ceylon, because it shows how the archaeological finds at Sanchi established the veracity of the accounts of the Third Council recorded in the *Mahāvamsa*. Regarding the famous toranas of Sanchi, Dr. Wimalananda says, "Its fame rests on its sanctity and the greatness of its artistic inspiration. Here we have a distinctive and living tradition of art of priceless value. Both artist and layman admire and respect these great works of art. Indeed, they evoke reverence and love. The national art of India had its origin at Sanchi, and it flourished

with extraordinary vitality because it interpreted both secular and religious inspirations of the Indian people. The religious conception in the great monument is profound."

While congratulating the Shell Company of Ceylon Ltd. on a fitting contribution made by it towards the success of the Buddha Jayanti, the Buddhists of Ceylon should be grateful for its thoughtful gesture in depicting the glory of Sanchi which to the Sinhalese Buddhist is a shrine of special importance, for the founder of the Faith in Ceylon, Mahinda, resided there before he left for this Island.

ANANDA G.

READERS' QUERIES

IS BUDDHISM AN ETHICAL SYSTEM?

BUDDHISM, no doubt, contains an excellent moral code, which is adaptable to all climes and ages, but it is much more than an ordinary moral teaching.

Morality, or *Sīla*, is only the A.B.C. of Buddhism, and is the first stage on the Path of Purity. Conduct, though essential, does not alone lead to one's emancipation. It should be coupled with wisdom or knowledge (*Paññā*). Wisdom and conduct are like the pair of wings of a bird. One of the appellatives of the Buddha is *Vijjā-carana-sampanna*, "endowed with wisdom and conduct." Wisdom is like the eyes, conduct like the feet.

In Buddhism there are deeds, which are ethically good, deeds which are ethically bad, deeds which are neither good nor bad, and deeds which tend to the ceasing of all

deeds. Good deeds are essential for one's emancipation, but when once the ultimate goal of the Holy Life is attained, one transcends both good and evil. Says the Buddha—

"Righteous things (*Dhamma*) you have to give up, how much more the unrighteous things (*Adhamma*). —(*Majjhima Nikāya*, No. 22).

The deed which is connected with attachment (*Lobha*), ill-will (*Dosa*), and delusion (*Moha*) is evil. That deed which is connected with non-attachment, goodwill, and wisdom is good.

The deeds of an Arahant, a perfect Saint, are neither good nor bad because he has gone beyond both good and bad. This does not mean that he is passive. He is active, but his activity is selfless and is directed to keep others to tread the Path he has trod himself. His

deeds, ordinarily accepted as "good," lack creative power as regards himself. Purest gold cannot be further purified. He accumulates no fresh Kammic activities. Understanding things as they truly are, he has finally shattered his cosmic chain of cause and effect.

How is Rebirth possible without a "Soul" to be reborn?

BIRTH, according to Buddhism, is simply the coming—into—being of the Khandhas, the aggregates (Khandhānaṃ pātubhāvo).

Just as the arising of a physical state is conditioned by a preceding state as its cause, even so the coming-into-being of this psycho-physical life is conditioned by causes anterior to its birth. The present process of becoming is the result of the craving for becoming in the last birth, and the present craving for becoming conditions the life in a future birth.

As one life-process is possible without a permanent thing passing from one thought-moment to another, a series of life-processes is possible without anything to transmigrate from one life to another.

This Buddhist doctrine of rebirth should be differentiated from the theory of re-incarnation which implies the transmigration of a soul and its invariable fleshly rebirth.

According to Buddhism no permanent soul or any unchanging spiritual substance transmigrates from one life to another. If one prefers, one may say that we inherit our Kammic activities. Our natural abilities and our inherent characteristics are due to this Kamma.

How are we to believe that there is a Past Birth?

THE most valuable evidence Buddhists cite in favour of rebirth is the Buddha, for He deve-

loped a knowledge which enabled Him to perceive the past and future lives. Says He: "With clairvoyant vision, purified and supernormal, I perceived beings disappearing from one state of existence and re-appearing in another: I beheld the base and the noble, the beautiful and the ugly, the happy and the miserable, and beings passing according to their deeds."

Following His instructions His disciples also developed this knowledge and were able to read their past lives to a great extent.

The acquisition of this faculty is not restricted only to the Buddha and His disciples. Any person,

whether Buddhist or not, could possess this power.

Some Indian Rshis, even before the advent of the Buddha, were distinguished for such powers as clairvoyance, clairvoyance, thought reading, remembering past births, etc. For instance, the ascetic Asita, also known as *Kala Devata*, who foretold that prince Siddhattha would become a Buddha, was able to read both the past and the future to some extent.

(These have been answered by reference to Venerable Narada Mahathera's "The Buddha Dhamma.")



First Re-union Dinner of the Y.M.B.A., held on the 22nd of June, 1957.

All members are kindly requested to donate at least one year's membership fee to the Fort Branch Building Fund, and enrol a new member each month.

For particulars please write

**Hony. General Secretary,
Y. M. B. A.,
Colombo.**

NEWS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

VEN. NARADA THERA IN PEKING

AT the invitation of the Buddhist Association of China, Ven. Narada Thera of Ceylon arrived in Peking on July 24th on a Buddhist Goodwill Mission. On the day after his arrival he paid his respects to the Buddha's Tooth Relic. During his short stay he gave lectures on meditation and Abhidhamma to the student monks of the Buddhist Academy. The Buddhist Association made arrangements for him to visit the most important temples in Peking, the Great Wall of China and other places of interest.

In the course of his memorable and interesting interview with the Premier he complimented him on the present material prosperity of the country and on having banned racing, gambling and prostitution in China. He expressed his pleasure on having established a Department for Religious Affairs and on the freedom of religious worship that prevails in New China. The Premier asserted that there was complete freedom to practise and propagate one's religion. It was true, he added, that the new Government was opposed to subversive political activities of some foreign missionaries.

In memory of his visit to Peking the Ven. Narada, presenting a relic of the Buddha to the Buddhist Association, remarked that China has had a glorious past and would have a still more glorious future if she would work for her material development without ignoring her spiritual progress. He wished that the relic of the Buddha would con-

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duce to her genuine peace and happiness of China.

Ven. Narada left Peking on 1st August to spend his *Vassa* in Singapore before he resumed his world Buddhist Goodwill Mission.

(From the Buddhist Association of China).

Member Elected on 12.8.57: M. W. Neil Perera, 20, Floors Lane, Dematagoda, Colombo 9.

"TAKE IT OR LEAVE IT"

THE Social Service Activities Branch of the Y.M.B.A. has arranged The "Take It or Leave It" show to be held at 6 p.m. on October 3, 1957, at the Association hall.

A panel of ten contestants are expected to take part. The contestants are allowed the choice of one of the following subjects:—

General Knowledge.
Classical Music.
General Science.
Sports.
Popular Music.
English Literature.
Films.
Natural Science.
History and Geography.

It is desirable that the contestants do not all select one identical subject. A panel of contestants both males and females will be selected with a choice of a variety of subjects.

Please write to the Secretary, Social Service Activities Branch for further particulars and application forms. Applications close on the 18th September, 1957.

The above show will be recorded at 6 p.m. on Thursday, October 3, 1957, at the Y.M.B.A. hall. Admission will be by free tickets to members and guests. As the number of tickets available is limited, members are kindly requested to apply early to avoid disappointment. Tickets available from:—

NELSON D. WIJAYANAYAKE,
Hony. Secretary,
Social Service Activities Branch.

BANA PREACHING FOR SEPTEMBER

Regular Sermons are conducted every Sunday at 9 a.m.
at the Association Hall by Pandit Bhikkhus
ALL ARE WELCOME

1st Sunday	...	Ven'ble Pandit Raddelle Pannaloka Thero.
8th Sunday	...	Ven'ble Vinayacharya Dombagoda Sri Revata Thero.
15th Sunday	...	Ven'ble Karaputugala Dhammawansa Thero.
22nd Sunday	...	Ven'ble Heenetiyana Dhammaloka Thero.
29th Sunday	...	Ven'ble Mavittara Sri Revata Anunayaka Thero.

REMEMBRANCE DAY—PIRITH PINKAMA

The Annual Pinkama in remembrance of our dead colleagues will be held on September 28th and 29th at the Association Hall.

Saturday, September 28th

All-night Pirith commencing from 9 p.m., Ven'ble Mavittara Sri Revata Anunayaka Thero, presiding.

Sunday, September 29th

7 a.m. Heel Dana; 9 a.m. Dhamma Sermon by Ven'ble Pandith Raddelle Pannaloka Thero; 11 a.m. Sangika Dana with Pirikaras to Bhikkhus of the three Nikayas.

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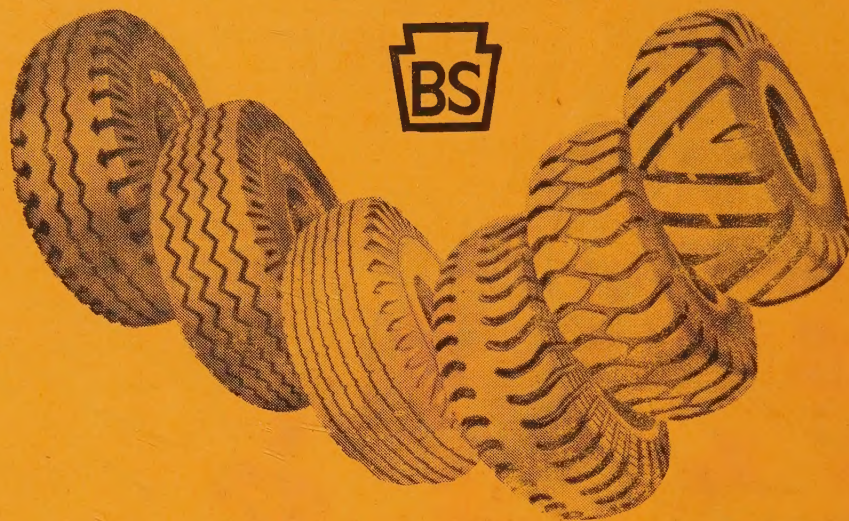
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